DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 264 240 SP 027 133

AUTHOR Habel, John
TITLE The College of Education and the Teacher Center.
PUB DATE 6 Nov 85
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (Biloxi, MS, November 6, 1985).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cooperative Programs; Institutional Cooperation; *Schools of Education; *Teacher Centers; Teacher Education; *Teacher Educators; Teacher Role; Theory Practice Relationship

ABSTRACT

Teacher centers began as small-scale, particularistic, dynamic, and tentative organizational forms. Each center developed its own personality, and no single institutional norm became the mold from which centers were cast. This fact has important implications for the kinds of collaborative arrangements into which teacher centers and teacher educators have entered. The center and the teachers it serves gain when teacher educators share their expertise in ways that encourage teachers to integrate theory into their work, when traditional barriers of status and formal scheduling are modified so that professors and teachers can cooperatively understand and address daily classroom problems, and when university faculty recognize and respect teachers' initiative toward professional development. Through the agency of collaboration, teacher centers and teacher education institutions have had some success at overcoming the historical impediments to integrating university expertise with the on-site needs of teachers. It appears that increasingly large numbers of professors and practictioners have come to appreciate the value of multiple perspectives and democratic intentions in an enterprise as complex as teacher education. A four-page reference list concludes the paper. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED264240

THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND THE TEACHER CENTER

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, November 6, 1985

John Habel

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

SP027 133

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Habel

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Ever since teacher centers appeared in this country in the late 1960's they have posed a challenge to teacher education institutions. Teacher Centers have been the gathering place of teachers who believe that their real education for teaching began the day they took over their first classes. For these teachers, the lessons they learn about teaching in their own classrooms are more powerful and effective than anything they received in college, in schools of education, or in the traditional in-service workshop or course. As Lortie (1975) observed, they are reluctant to grant expert status to professors in teacher education institutions.

It was a desire for work-based professional development to deal specifically with the technical needs of teachers that provided the impetus for the teacher center movement. The teachers who established the first teacher centers wanted a new organizational form that was outside the pattern of super- and subordination that characterized the nexus of relationships within hierarchical state and local education agencies and with administrators and universities (Lortie, 1975). They intended to break the hegemony that the university exercised in the professional development of teachers. Teacher centers were to provide a "bulwark against pressures moving educators against their sense of what was good for children" (Alberty, Neujahr and Weber, 1981), pressures that are exerted by the staples of school district and university programs: preordained and mandated courses, grade/credit systems and experts' notion's of teachers needs.

The growth of the teacher center movement in this country has animated the old debate over the right balance between the liberal and the technical in teacher education. As teacher centers have taken their place opposite departments, schools and colleges of education as agencies designed to plan, deliver, and evaluate teacher education, the old dualisms - theory/practice,

basic applied, preservice/in-service, liberal/technical - have acquired higher definition. Against this backdrop, educators have established programs that reflect opposing conceptions of teacher education. The education facilities at the universities of Kansas and of Tennessee are moving toward the liberal arts pole. Instead of devoting most of the last two years of their course of study to education courses, prospective high school teachers at these universities will follow the same liberal arts curriculum that is required of all liberal arts students. Only after they have received their degree and are admitted to the one-year teacher education program will they pursue, in condensed form, the methods courses and field experiences that are the core of the curriculum. The state of New Jersey, on the other hand, has recently passed legislation that allows prospective teachers with a B.A. to bypass college or university courses altogether. New Jersey's legislators (and, presumably, its educators) believe that the best way to prepare teachers is to establish training programs that are close to the daily routine of teachers' work. Therefore, state law empowers school districts to certify their teachers by giving teachers work-based training that deals specifically with their perceived technical needs.

These programs have resolved the question of how teachers should be educated by asserting that only one component of the dualism, either the liberal or the technical, provides the best conceptual framework for teacher education. There are, however, educators who are seeking a different kind of resolution. Edelfelt and Johnson (1984), Devaney (1976), Gollnick and Massanari, (1981), Mertens and Yarger (1981), and others have written about the collaborative efforts of teacher centers and institutions of higher education to attenuate the dualism in teacher education that Dewey (1904) called "the unconscious duplicity, which is one of the chief evils of the

teaching profession." These efforts are components of a reform movement in teacher education whose purpose it is to foster closer working relationships among teacher education institutions, public school districts, and teacher organizations. Those engaged in this collaboration, the members of teacher center staffs and professors of education, recognize that both the liberal and the technical are necessary components of the teacher education curriculum and that neither is sufficient. They want to reduce the distance that has separated for so long the social and intellectual lives of educators in public schools from educators in teacher education institutions. They would agree with the position that Whitehead took in 1917 (quoted in Silberman, 1970):

> The antithesis between a technical and liberal education is fallacious. There is no adequate technical education which is not liberal and no liberal education which is not technical: that is, no education which does not impart both technique and intellectual vision. In simpler language, education should turn out the pupil with something he knows well and something he can do well. This intimate union of theory and practice aids both.

Messerli (1977) observed that the history of teacher education is filled with attempts by education faculties and school teachers and administrators to collaborate. He wrote that collaboration "is an old ideal imperfectly achieved." What he found new is "some of the leverage that encourages and even forces teacher educators to share more of their authority and more of their spoils than they have in the past." The leverage to which Messerli referred grows out of a number of recent developments: The teaching profession is demanding greater control over professional development programs. Teachers are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the failure of teacher educators to link the preservice and in-service components of the

curriculum. They are becoming more likely to challenge curricular programs that were developed outside their own settings. Enrollments in departments, schools and colleges of education are declining, and in more and more institutions teacher education is becoming a post-baccalaureate program. As a consequence, teacher education curricula contain fewer courses. In addition, each of the generally noncommunicating educational constituencies - teachers, parents, students, school district leaders, education faculties - is insisting that it be consulted in shaping common goals.

Beam (1981) observed that these developments have contributed to new a conception of what the work of a professor of education entails. Fewer members of the education professoriate confine themselves to "ivory tower" pursuits that fail to accomodate to the demands of the practicing teacher's context. More of them are assuming the role of the "clinical" professor who goes out to schools and teacher centers to consult in a confidential and nonsupervisory way with individual teachers and small groups. Cooper and Leiter (1981) delineated the qualities of effective clinical professors. They must be able to relate well to adult learners (the teachers with whom they are consulting). They must understand and value collegiality. They must lead teachers to move beyond concern with immediate problems to more reflective analysis of their teaching. And, they must be willing to adapt their delivery strategies and content to the priorities of teachers rather than follow the traditional practice of insisting that teachers tailor their expectations to the "expert's" priorities.

The developments that encourage collaboration in teacher education are changing the work of teachers also. Fox (1978) noted that teachers are becoming more involved in the generation and dissemination of knowledge about teaching. They are being asked to draw out from their personal experience

what can best be shared with their colleagues and to assume the roles of mentor and evaluator that had previously been the domain of professors and administrators. Beam suggested that this shift in the role of teachers raises subtle issues of teacher self-confidence, of the creative use of authority and leadership, and of analysis of curricula; questions with which educators have only just begun to deal.

Messerli pointed out that collaboration is neither "a new idea whose time has come," nor is it a panacea that grows out of the mutual objective of all participants in the educational enterprise to improve the preparation of teachers. In actuality, there is no such mutuality among practitioners, education professors, and the general public. Each group is equivocal about its objectives and its stake in the teacher education enterprise, and each group is suspicious of the objectives and the stake of those with whom it proposes to collaborate. Messerli thought that educators had "missed this troublesome fact or tried to wish it away" in their eagerness to grasp simplistic prescriptions for reform. Moreover, he believed that "[m]any of the objectives of collaborators are tangential or downright antagonistic." In his analysis of the prospects for a merger of the activities of practioners and professors, he argued further that:

> . . . we do no have a sufficient basis of consensus and subject matter for building collaboration that will bring theory and practice together. Our failure to come to grips with this monumental problem in a forthright, tough-minded, and intellectually honest manner will surely guarantee one more period of great expectations followed by little more than an new educational twist or frill. In turn, this failure will nurture a growing public skepticism, if not downright cynicism. Yet we

speak and write as if the bridge has been built and all that remains is locking arms and marching across together. If the gap between theory and practice is to be crossed, the bridge must first be built.

Messerli appreciated the potential benefits to be dervied from collaboration, but, from his perspective, in the mid-1970s, educators had made little progress toward laying the foundations of an enduring bridge between theory and practice. Miles (1975) also expressed skepticism about multi-institutional collaboration as a strategy for teacher renewal:

> The costs or risks [of linkage], of course, are that inhabitants of each [institution] naturally tend not only to protect their vested interests, but ordinarily expect that simple extension and expansion of existing procedures is all that is needed to solve the problem at hand. Institutional blinders tend to restrict the development of innovative solutions, and the clash of interests tends to result in mutual vetoeing operations. ... Since most institutions are already multifunctional, use of the [inter-institution] linkage model tends to produce a giantized version, a linked system in which each partner institution tends to retain all its old functions and to compete with other partner institutions for scarce resources. <u>The likelihood of close focus on a particular goal (in the teacher center case, the development of teacher confidence and competence) tends to be obscured, blocked, or watered down amid a maze of competing goals</u> [author's emphasis] (in this case, accreditation, certification, employment, salary advancement, product delivery, special educational services, and the like).

Both Messerli and Miles penned their thoughts about collaboration at about the time Congress had begun to formulate legislation that would establish grants for the Federal Teacher Centers Program. This program stipulated that ten percent of the moneys disbursed be awarded to colleges and universities to fund teacher centers attached to teacher training institutions. It stipulated further that each of these teacher centers be governed by a policy board of which teachers, not professors, would constitute the majority. These stipulations sparked opposition from the rival educational constituencies. Teacher center purists insisted that teacher centers were for teachers alone and that the special value of centers would diminish if professors became involved with them. Some of the more timorous members of the education professoriate feared that an agency in their midst that was governed by teachers would undermine their authority or reduce the liberal component of the teacher education curriculum. These objections notwithstanding, the most important outcome of the federal legislation was to establish a new organizational form through which practitioners and professors could attempt once again to negotiate collaborative relationships. Of particular significance was the absence in the legislation of a hard and fast set of guidelines to which potential collaborators were required to adhere. Within the broad parameters of the federal program, the first generation of teacher center innovators were granted carte blanche to establish centers that fit the exegencies of their settings. Thus, teacher centers began as small-scale, particularistic, dynamic, and tentative organizational forms. Each center developed its own personality, and no single institutional norm became the mold from which centers were cast.

This fact has important implications for the kinds of collaborative arrangements into which teacher centers and teacher educators have entered; arrangements that Messerli and Miles could not have anticipated. Messerli and Miles were not sanguine about collaborative undertakings, because in their view the collaborators, as institutional forms, were monolithic, stolid, and inhibited by anxiousness about status and role. In their analyses of the prospects for collaboration among the various educational constituencies, both Messerli and Miles demonstrated their belief in what Devaney (1978) called the "myth of generality." They tried to abstract and generalize the operations of educational institutions, and in so doing, they overlooked how "grassroots idiosyncracies" (Devaney's term) - place, time, problems, leadership, followership - make each teacher center, and, to a lesser extent, each school and teacher education institution unique. As idiosyncratic organizations, teacher centers are especially resourceful collaborators. They have flourished by creating networks among themselves, by adapting to changes in their societal contexts, and by cementing relationships with other educational constituencies.

Collaborations do not emerge when large, closed institutions collide; Messerli and Miles saw this. They failed to see, however, that multi-institutional collaboration will occur in a myriad of arrangements when prospective collaborators in small, local arenas address issues that are of mutual concern. There are many reports in the teacher education literature about the collaborative activities of practitioners and professors (see References). In all these collaborations, the participants have enjoyed some success in finding their own, tentative, situation-specific solutions to the entanglements present in the matrix of university-teacher center relationships.

Green and Olson (1981) analyzed the collaboration between the university and the teacher center in terms of the flow of benefits:

> On the one hand, the university gains when its faculty members participate in center activities that enhance their capacities as teachers of both preservice students and professionals, find ready access to current information about schools, and fashion stronger collegial ties with teachers in the field. The University may also be said to profit when its preservice teachers exchange ideas with experienced teachers, thereby building continuity between university studies and eventual work. The center and the teachers it serves gain when professors share their expertise in ways that encourage teachers to integrate theory into their work, when traditional barriers of status and formal scheduling are modified so that professors and teachers can cooperatively understand and address daily classroom problems, and when university faculty recognize and respect teachers' initiatives toward professional development.

Through the agency of collaboration, teacher centers and teacher education institutions have had some success at overcoming the historical impediments to integrating university expertise with the on-site needs of teachers. Van Fleet (1977) cautioned, however, that it is unrealistic to expect this "noble experiment" in increased teacher participation and cooperation among those involved in teacher education to spark wholesale reforms. Special interests and the old dualisms remain very firmly entrenched. Nevertheless, it appears that increasingly large numbers of practitioners and professors have come to appreciate the value of multiple perspectives and democratic intentions in an enterprise as complex as teacher

education. Phillips (1980), fully cognizant of how the best of democrative intentions are often unfulfilled, viewed collaborative activities with a healthy combination of skepticism and hopefulness:

> There can be no cheerful conclusion. Researchers and practitioners might follow the lead of games theorists, whose rule of rationality is codified in the so-called "mini-max" principle: Minimize the maximum loss you can suffer. If both communities do this, and also expect the loss, then anything else that happens must be a pleasant surprise. By expecting little from each other, occasionally both the researcher and the practitioner may be in for a small treat.

References

Alberty, Beth; Neujahr, James; and Weber; Lillian. An Exploration of Relationships Between Use and Setting in a Teachers' Center. San Francisco: Far West Laboratory, 1981.

Beam, Amy. "The Involvement of Higher Education in Federally Funded Teacher Centers." In The Role of Higher Education in Teacher Centers. pp. 10-30. Edited by Donna M. Gollnick and Karl Massanari. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, 1981.

Borrowman, Merle, L. The Liberal and Technical in Teacher Education: A Historical Survey of American Thought. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1956.

Burke, William I. "Teacher Centers: Cooperative Endeavors." The High School Journal 61 (January 1978): 150-161.

Cook, Gillian E. "Collaboration, Change and Concern: Professional Development Through Teacher Centers." English Education 13 (May 1981): 97-104.

Cooper, Myrna and Leiter, Maurice. "Bringing the Colleges to the Center: The New York City Experience." In The Role of Higher Education in Teacher Centers. pp. 72-76. Edited by Donna M. Gollnick and Karl Massanari. Washington, D.C.: AACTE, 1981.

Curry, Lynn. "Teacher Centers and University/District Collaboratives." Phi Delta Kappan 61 (May 1980): 631-633.

Davies, Hopkin M. and Aquino, John T. "Collaboration in Continuing Professional Education." The Journal of Teacher Education 26 (Fall 1975): 274-277.

Devaney, Kathleen. "Mapping New Territory" (unpublished manuscript). Quoted in David E. Hunt, "Teacher Centers as Persons-In-Relation." In Teacher Centers: What Place in Education? pp.97-108. Edited by Sharon Feiman. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Dewey, John. "The Relation of Theory to Practice in Education," National Society for the Scientific Study of Education. The Relation of Theory to Practice in the Education of Teachers, Third Yearbook, Part I, Bloomington, IL: Public School Publishing Co., 1904 (quoted in Merle L. Borrowman, ed., Teacher Education in America. New York: Teachers College Press, 1965).

Edelfelt, Roy A. and Johnson, Margo. The Experience of Higher Education with Teacher Centers. AACTE and Southern New Jersey Regional Teacher Center, 1984.

Fox, G. Thomas, Jr. "Generating Knowledge from Field Experience: Two Competing Conclusions About Potential Teacher Center Support." The High School Journal 41 (January 1978): 186-204.

Gollnick, Donna M. and Massanari, Karl, eds. The Role of Higher Education in Teacher Centers. Washington, D.C.: AACTE, 1981.

Green, Nancy and Olson, Jerry G. "A Collaborative Approach to Teacher Centering." In The Role of Higher Education in Teacher Centers. pp.56-62. Edited by Gollnick, Donna M. and Massanari, Karl. Washington, D.C.: AACTE, 1981.

Holt, Ladd and Peterson, Kenneth. "University and Public School Cooperation for Professional Growth." Action in Teacher Education 3 (Winter-Spring 1981): 65-75.

Krueger, Christine. "Universities and Teacher Centers: Lessons from Florida." Action in Teacher Education 2 (Spring 1980): 83-88.

Lortie, Dan C. Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1975.

_____. " The Organizational Niche of Teacher Centers: One Observer's Views." In Teacher Centers: What Place in Education? pp. 190-203. Edited by Sharon Feiman. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Maddox, Kathryn and Holt, Mildred. "Teacher Education Center: School/College Parity." Catalyst for Change 3 (Spring 1974): 19-23.

Mertens, Sally K. and Yarger, Sam J. Teacher Centers in Action. Syracuse: Syracuse Area Teacher Center, 1981.

Messerli, Jonathan. "Building the Bridge Before We Can Cross It." Phi Delta Kappan 58 (May 1977): 667-670.

Miles, Matthew B. "The Teacher Center: Educational Change through Teacher Development" and "Reflections and Commentary on the Syracuse Conference on the Teacher Center." In In-Service Education and Teachers' Centers. Edited by Elizabeth Adams. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1975.

Nutting, William C. "Professional Development Centers: The Utah Experiment." Phi Delta Kappan 63 (February 1982): 394-397.

Phillips, D.C. "What Do the Researcher and the Practitioner Have to Offer Each Other?" Educational Researcher 9 (December 1980): 17-20.

Quinn, Peter. "Structures for Collaboration in Preservice Teacher Education Centers." Phi Delta Kappan 58 (November 1976): 254-255.

Ruchkin, Judith P. "Teacher Centers: How Does One School-College Collaboration Work?" The Journal of Teacher Education 25 (Summer 1974): 170-174.

Silberman, Charles E. Crisis in the Classroom: The Remaking of American Education. New York: Random House, 1970.

Van Fleet, Alanson. "Teacher Centers in Florida: A Case Study." School Review 85 (May 1977): 412-424.